

# On the Cutting Edge

In Scott Watt's Santa Monica office, eclectic pieces of art share wall and desk space with family snapshots of his smiling children and grandchildren. The bay window overlooks lush trees and a small neighborhood park, where strollers and joggers go by. As evidenced by his work environment much of Scott's life is centered around his family and friends, which is why Watt Companies, the real estate development company he chairs, focuses on enhancing people's lives through the creation of quality living and work structures, something that Scott admits to "getting a lot of satisfaction from."

"I have always had a keen interest in reaching out to others," says Scott Watt, a soft-spoken and easygoing man who runs one of the most successful residential, commercial, and industrial real estate companies in the United States. This leadership role has allowed Scott to not only excel professionally, but also to exercise his passion for helping people reach their highest potential. It is this passion that has motivated Scott to create a legacy of more than 40 years of charitable giving, which includes a solid history of giving to Cedars-Sinai.

In October 2007 Scott Watt was among a small group of selected guests invited to Cedars-Sinai's Future of Surgical Technology event, which showcased some of the newest surgical equipment, and highlighted the powerful impact it could have on patient care. Featured at the event was the daVinci® Surgical System. This state-of-the-art robotic equipment provides surgeons with an alternative to surgery and conventional laparoscopy by enabling surgeons to perform even the most complex and delicate procedures through very small incisions with unmatched precision. Scott was wowed. He and other guests even got a chance to operate the equipment. "I was really impressed by the versatility of that particular instrument, how it can make recovery so much easier

for patients. After learning about the robot and operating it, I knew I *had* to make a financial commitment to supporting this technology. I was convinced that it was not a luxury, but an absolute need for the hospital."

"Scott's gift was the catalyst to buying the new robotic system," says Bruce Gewertz, MD, Cedars-Sinai's surgeon-in-chief, and the chair of the Department of Surgery. "Before Scott's donation we had one daVinci, but we needed the upgraded version with a fourth arm. We were also looking to increase the number we owned." Once Scott made the donation the new equipment was bought and installed



PHOTO BY MARK HARMEL

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very quickly, all within just four months of the event.

“The daVinci Surgical System allows doctors to do exceptionally complex surgical procedures,” explains Gewertz. “Sometimes it’s even easier to do a surgery using the robot rather than performing an open surgery.” From a console a few feet away the surgeon views a high resolution, 3-D image of the surgical site. The camera and two robotic arms are inserted through the incisions as the surgeon directs the arms from the console. The computer enhanced system scales the hand movements of the surgeon down to micro-movements of the surgical instruments inside the patient’s body. The system relays feedback sensations to the surgeon, providing a substitute for sensation. Every surgical maneuver is controlled by the surgeon, but the robotic arms improve the surgeon’s precision and ability to manipulate instruments in small spaces.

The benefits—for patients, doctors, and the hospital in general—are far-reaching. With two robots available physicians can schedule surgeries sooner, and simultaneously. “Now we can use two systems in different rooms at the same time,” says Dr. Gewertz. “And with the new equipment’s expanded capabilities, we’ve literally doubled our surgical capacities.” This, of course, frees up more space in the hospital, too.

Not to mention the fact that patients prefer this type of surgery to traditional surgery. There’s a lot less cutting, considerably less postoperative pain, less medication, and the patient’s duration of stay is significantly shortened. In general, the anxiety that typically surrounds a major surgery is greatly reduced. “Its versatility, along with its ability to save lives, played a big role in motivating me to support its purchase,” says Scott.

Scott Watt was no stranger to Cedars-Sinai before attending the technology event: both his parents had been past patients; his father underwent brain surgery

at the hospital twice. “I was thoroughly impressed with the quality of the care my parents had received at Cedars-Sinai,” he says.

In addition, Scott also has many happy memories at the hospital. “Two of my five grandchildren were born at Cedars-Sinai,” he says. Less than year ago Scott married Obaida Watt, who emigrated from Afghanistan nearly 20 years ago. The two are currently expecting a child together. Scott also has two children from a previous marriage. Years ago, Scott and his ex-wife set up a family foundation, the Capstone Foundation, with the purpose of teaching their children the importance of charitable giving. All family members would regularly donate to the foundation, and together they would decide where that money should be spent and how it would be distributed. “I was brought up to be generous and giving,” shares Scott. “That’s how my dad was, and I think it’s important for our family to be that way as a whole.”

In 1947 Scott’s father, Ray Watt, started building homes for returning GIs in Southern California. Since then, the family business he created has grown into a vastly diversified real estate development and building company that has overseen the development of new homes for over 1,000,000 families.

Over the years the Watt family and Watt Industries have generously supported a variety of organizations ranging from the Boy Scouts of America to the Union Rescue Mission. However, Scott admits that his donation to Cedars-Sinai has been the most emotional and strategic one yet. Which is just as well, because the positive impact it’s made on the hospital and the community at-large is simply priceless. ■



*To watch a video of the daVinci robot in action, visit [discoveringforlife.org](http://discoveringforlife.org)*